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**Manuscripts & Folklife Archives
Department of Library Special Collections
Western Kentucky University
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Descriptive Inventory

MSS 63 SHAKERS – South Union, Kentucky

5 boxes. 35 folders. 218 items. 1800-1916. Originals, photocopies, typescripts.

1929.22.1

HISTORY

Ann Lee (1736-1784), mother of Shakerism, claimed a few years before her death to have experienced a vision in which she saw the next great opening for the gospel occurring in 1801 or 1802 in the southwestern part of the United States. John Meacham, Benjamin S. Youngs, and Issachar Bates embarked on a missionary journey to that area on January 1, 1805. This trek proved to be one of more than one thousand miles. Because of the great religious revival taking place in Logan County, Kentucky, the Shakers proceeded to that region. They gained converts and in 1807 established a communal society, which practiced celibacy and pacifism, at South Union in Logan County. Membership peaked at 349 in 1827. Disbanded in 1922, South Union was the last of the six western societies to close.

The industrious Shakers established an attractive and inviting village. They planted orchards, raised purebred cattle, built mills, began a silkworm industry, and had large-scale seed and preserves businesses. They marketed their seeds and preserves widely, making annual selling trips to New Orleans and other southern destinations.

The Shakers were very resourceful and visionary, incorporating inventions of “the world” into the Society when financially feasible. They were often the first in their community to introduce new and easier methods of achieving higher work yields into their everyday tasks.

Bibliographical Notes

The Collection.

Kentucky Library, Vertical Files, Newspaper clippings.

Neal, Julia. By Their Fruits, 1947.

**Program. Thirteenth Annual South Union Festival,
South Union, Ky., 1974.**

COLLECTION NOTE

The collection is comprised chiefly of business papers and manuscript books of the Shaker Society at South Union, Kentucky. The business papers consist primarily of land transactions, receipts, and account books. One account book records transactions made on a southern seed-selling trip.

The largest part of the collection is comprised of five journals, covering most of the period 1865-1916, kept by an elder or eldress to document the activities of the Society. Four of the five journals originated in the North, East and Center "families," named after the communal dwelling houses at South Union. The remaining journal, known as Shaker Record C, was maintained by Elder Harvey L. Eads and includes annual censuses of Society members from 1867-1878. Indexes to the journals are available.

The collection also includes hymnals compiled by different members and a book containing articles of agreement that were signed by probationary members on joining the Society.

SHELF LIST

| | | | |
|-----------|--|--|-----------|
| BOX 1 | Business papers and account books | 1800-1889 | 200 items |
| Folder 1a | Inventory and data on Shaker societies | | 3 items |
| Folder 1 | Business papers | 1800-1809 | 5 items |
| Folder 2 | Business papers | 1810-1819 | 35 items |
| Folder 3 | Business papers | 1820-1829 | 21 items |
| Folder 4 | Business papers | 1830-1885 | 18 items |
| Folder 5 | Business papers – Willie W. Jones | 1813-1826 | 16 items |
| Folder 6 | Business papers – Elijah M. Covington | 1817-1831 | 11 items |
| Folder 7 | Miscellaneous receipts | 1817-1833 | 75 items |
| Folder 8 | Miscellaneous papers; hymns | 1850; 1865, n.d. | 14 items |
| Folder 9 | Account book of seed-selling trip | Nov. 15-Dec.1, 1843; Nov. 6-Dec. 1, 1844 | 1 item |
| Folder 10 | Account book | 1855-1889 | 1 item |

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|------------------|--|--|----------------|
| BOX 2 | Shaker Record C of Harvey L. Eads | 1865-1879 | 1 item |
| Folder 1 | Shaker Record C – Original (stored in vault) | 1865-1879 | 1 item |
| Folder 2 | Shaker Record C – Photocopy (pp. 1-97) of Folder 1 | Jan. 1, 1865- Dec. 31, 1866 | |
| Folder 3 | Shaker Record C – Photocopy (pp. 98-163) of Folder 1; includes census of members | Jan. 1-Dec. 31, 1867 | |
| Folder 4 | Shaker Record C – Photocopy (pp. 164-230) of Folder 1; includes census of members | Jan. 1-Dec. 31, 1868 | |
| Folder 5 | Shaker Record C – Photocopy (pp. 231-290) of Folder 1; includes censuses of members | Jan. 1, 1869- Dec. 31, 1870 | |
| Folder 6 | Shaker Record C – Photocopy (pp. 291-367) of Folder 1; includes censuses of members | Jan. 1, 1871- Dec. 31, 1873 | |
| Folder 7 | Shaker Record C – Photocopy (pp. 368-456) of Folder 1; includes censuses of members | Jan. 1, 1874- Dec. 31, 1876 | |
| Folder 8 | Shaker Record C – Photocopy (pp. 457-529) of Folder 1; includes censuses of members | Jan. 1, 1877- Oct. 18, 1879 | |
| BOX 3 | Members Agreements; North and East, and Center family journals | 1858-1908 | 8 items |
| Folder 1 | Articles of Agreement book signed by probationary members; name index | 1858-1904 | 2 items |
| Folder 2 | North and East families – Journal (Original stored in vault); name, subject, and chronological indexes | 1865; 1888- 1897 | 4 items |
| Folder 3a | North and East families – Journal – Photocopy of Folder 2 (pp. 1-125) arranged in chronological order | 1865; Mar. 1888- Mar. 1895 | 1 item |
| Folder 3b | North and East families – Journal – Photocopy of Folder 2 (pp. 126-153) arranged in chronological order | Apr. 1895- June 1897 | |

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|-----------------|--|---|----------------|
| Folder 4 | Center family – Journal kept by Lucilla Booker – Photocopy (original stored in vault) | Sept. 1, 1907- Dec. 31, 1908 | 1 item |
| Folder 5 | Center family – Journal kept by Lucilla Booker – Typescript of Folder 4; name and subject indexes | Sept. 1, 1907- Dec. 31, 1908 | |
| BOX 4 | Center family journals | 1909-1916 | 2 items |
| Folder 1 | Center family – Journal kept by Lucilla Booker – Original and photocopy (F1a) | Jan. 1, 1909- Dec. 31, 1910 | 1 item |
| Folder 2 | Center family – Journal kept by Lucilla Booker – Typescript of Folder 1; index | Jan. 1, 1909- Dec. 31, 1910 | |
| Folder 3 | Center family – Journal probably kept by Lucilla Booker – Original and photocopy (F3a,3b) | Jan. 1, 1913- Aug. 31, 1916 | 1 item |
| Folder 4 | Center family – Journal probably kept by Lucilla Booker – Typescript of Folder 3; index | Jan. 1, 1913- Aug. 31, 1916 | |
| BOX 5 | Manuscript books and hymnals | 1844-1886 | 7 items |
| Folder 1 | Hymnal, possibly of Nancy McNemar – Original and photocopy | 1844-1861 | 1 item |
| Folder 2 | Hymnal of Center family sisters, Room 6 | 1855-1870 | 1 item |
| Folder 3 | Hymnal of Eldress Mary Edwards | 1868-1870 | 1 item |
| Folder 4 | Book of poems, articles and hymns compiled by Birdie and Virgie Breedlove | 1874-1886 | 1 item |
| Folder 5 | Book of poems, articles and hymns compiled by Birdie and Virgie Breedlove – Photocopy of Folder 4 | 1874-1886 | 1 item |
| Folder 6 | Book of hymns (manuscript and printed) compiled by Harvey L. Eads – Original and photocopy | 1875-1876 | 1 item |

Folder 7 Music book compiled by Harvey L. Eads 1880 1 item

BIBLIOGRAPHIC RECORD

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Business records, deeds, notes, receipts, surveys, agreements, bill of complaint, etc., 1800-85; account books, 1843-89; journals, 1865-1916; agreement book of probationary members, 1858-1904; and manuscript hymnals, 1844-86 (6) of the Shaker Society of South Union, Kentucky.

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Hodges/Niedermeier/Jeffrey 11/30/2016